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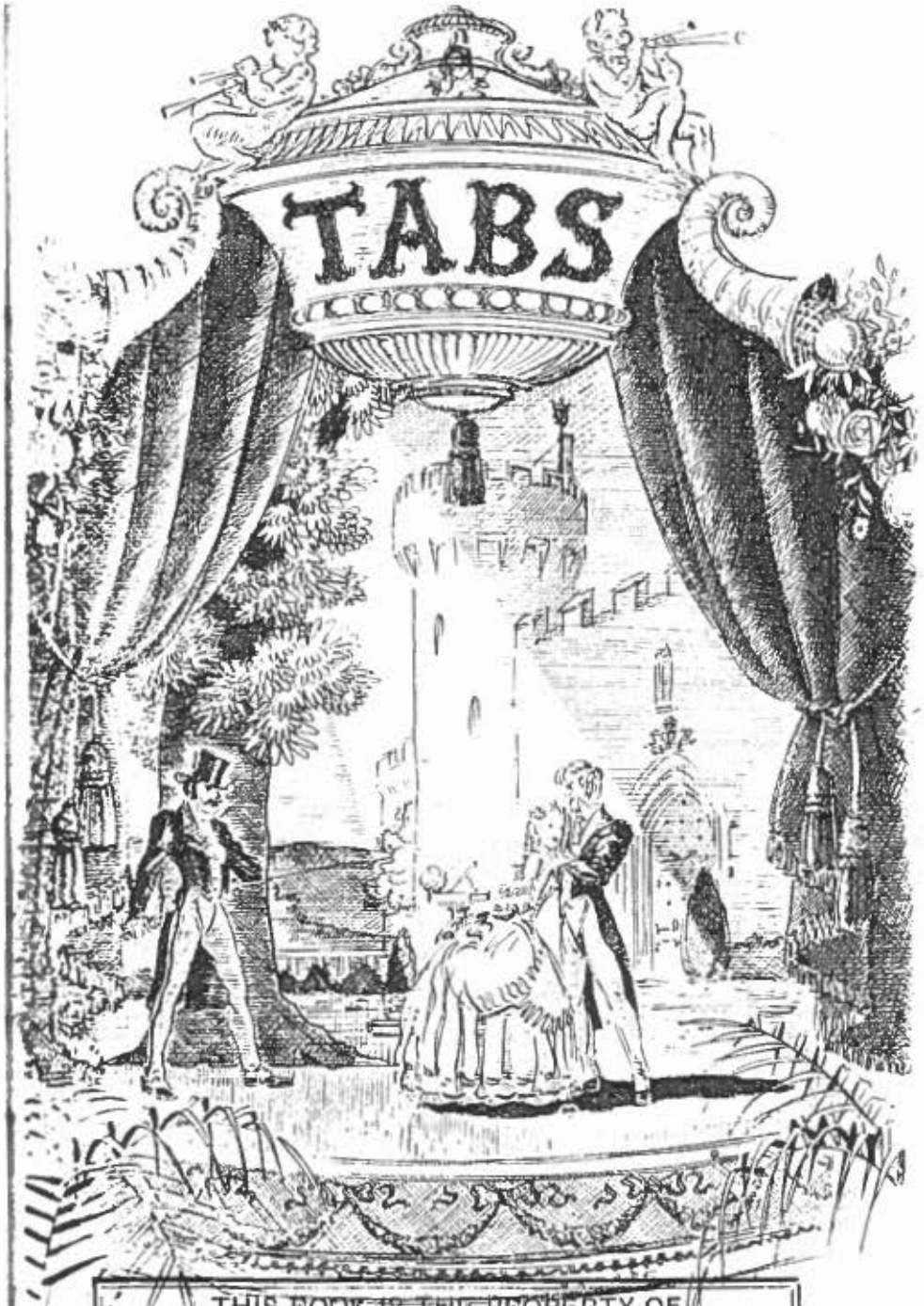

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TABS

ISSUED BY THE STRAND ELECTRIC COMPANY
IN THE INTEREST OF THE AMATEUR THEATRE

Editorial

Our apologies are due for being a little late with the publication of this issue of Tabs, and although the plea may be somewhat hackneyed, we really must hang the responsibility on the interruption of a week or so ago.

It is intended that this publication shall be of material help to all associated with the Amateur Stage, particularly in the matter of Stage Lighting and Effects, and with each issue we shall endeavour to bring some enlightment on a particular section to you.

We invite your co-operation in this matter, because one individual problem may also be that of many others, and we feel that to deal with any request under the heading of "Queries" would be serving the majority of our readers. Therefore, will you please write to us putting forward your Stage Lighting problems so that we can publish for the benefit of all, our recommendations.

It is hoped that Societies will take sufficient interest in this to enable us to make "Queries" a regular feature of this publication.

Lecture at Leeds

On page 19 of our last issue we gave details of the Northern Exhibition at the Leeds Electricity Department Showrooms, and below we give a short report of the Lecture given by Mr. L. G. Applebee, Manager of our Theatre Lighting Department, on September 14th, entitled "Coloured and Directional Lighting as applied to the Stage."

Mr. Applebee opened his lecture with a brief resume of the history of Stage Lighting. He traced what he described as the Cavalcade of Stage Lighting from the 5th century B.C. down to the present date, touching on all types of lighting in this country, the Continent and America.

The first section was illustrated by various lantern slides, which showed early candle, gas, and electric apparatus used at various times.

The second section of his talk was devoted to colour, and here some extremely interesting demonstrations of the effect of coloured light with coloured subjects was very clearly demonstrated by the use of Railway Posters of ordinary printers' pigment colours, some actual scene designs by the famous Adrian Samoiloff, and lastly on ordinary costumes which were ably demonstrated

Early type of Gas Floodlight

by Miss Robinson, a member of the staff of our Manchester Branch.

The demonstration also included some interesting experiments in connection with fluorescent material, and ultra violet light pertaining to illusions and short scenes.

Whilst on the subject, the effect of coloured light on make up was also considered and demonstrated, showing the peculiar effect of particularly amber light on an ordinary straight make-up.

Section three was a comparison between modern American, Continental and English practice.

Section four consisted of a very detailed debate and description on the use of the lighting of a Cyclorama, full details being given of the Continental method of using seven hues of colour, in comparison with the English method of three colour system advocated by Professor Young in 1803 which is the method used by the Strand Electric, in their system of Cyclorama Lighting.

Section five gave details of modern Stage Lighting

View of Electricity Showrooms, Leeds

equipment, together with an interesting talk of the function and construction of dimmers, and also here the subject of Directional Lighting as applied to the Stage was fully demonstrated by means of the projector lamp type Spot-light and Lantern slides, and diagrams were used to indicate the use of these lanterns, particularly in indoor scenes.

The concluding section featured a talk on architectural faults and failures likely to occur in the construction of the small amateur play house or the type of public hall that has to cater for the occasional use of dramatic art.

Mr. Applebee, in this section, advocated the necessity of the architect and other people concerned in the design and construction of the hall having an early conference with a specialised firm of Stage Lighting experts such as ourselves, before the final plans were passed for building.

He demonstrated by means of lantern slides and the black-board the various " snags " which frequently occur not only from a Stage Lighting point of view, but also from stage technique generally.

Another View of Leeds Showrooms

'Penny Wise

It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of halls used for the presentation of Amateur shows are sadly lacking in proper stage lighting equipment. Many societies are fortunate enough to obtain the use of a fully equipped theatre, and thus have the benefit of up-to-date installations, but so many are perforce obliged to use Church halls, Village halls, and similar buildings where proper stage lighting facilities cannot be expected, and unless some additional lighting is introduced the production is bound to suffer to some degree.

Particular productions mostly need some special effect which cannot be obtained from the existing lighting, and in order to make the most of the presentation some augmentation is necessary. Correct lighting is such an essential to success that it is one that should be fully discussed between Committees and Producers.

In some cases it may be the question of expense that prevents societies from seeking outside aid in these matters, but when the matter has been fully investigated it will be seen that actually the cost is ridiculously low, sometimes merely a matter of shillings. Yet what an enormous difference to the presentation!

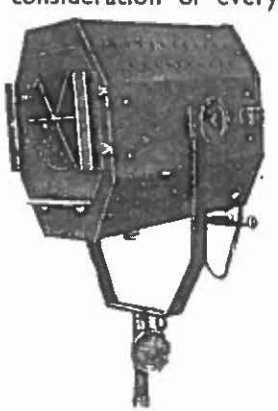
1,000 Watt Vertical Flood, complete with necessary fixings. 7/6 per week.

It is with the express object of serving Amateur Dramatic Societies that the Strand Electric & Engineering Co., Ltd., have set aside part of their theatrical Hire Department to deal exclusively with amateur productions, to co-

operate with Committees and Producers in order that the very best results may be obtained. Here are men of experience who for years have operated in the theatre world, and their advice is available free of charge. Mr. Norman Casty, who is responsible for this section, will supervise all matters in this direction and any help that may be desired should be addressed to him personally. If necessary he will be pleased to call and discuss any problem with Secretaries or interested parties, at any time that can be conveniently arranged.

A lot of money, time and thought are always expended in productions, striving to put on the best show possible. Hire of costumes, wigs, furniture, etc., are accepted as essential expenditures, but the hire of proper lighting equipment is equally necessary, the cost of which is a fraction of that spent in other directions. It supplies that finishing touch which lifts a production from the ordinary to the supreme.

Effects, Dimmers, Spots, Floodlights, in fact every conceivable part of stage lighting, are available. A few are illustrated, and these will give an idea of what can be done and what it costs, and they can be hired for any period—a night, a week or a month. Isn't it worth the consideration of every Society?



1,000 Watt Stage Spot, complete with stand and cable. 7/6 per week.

Enclosed with this copy of Tabs is a tentative enquiry form. Fill it up and send it in, and advice and suggestions for equipment will be sent free of charge. Do not think this places you under any obligation, because it does not, but it will serve to let you know that there is a service which can help Societies in their matters of lighting, and that the cost is not so frightening as may be thought.

Hints to Stage Managers & their Satellites

In short—The Black Squad. Comprising all those unseen heroes whom the producer praises grudgingly on the last night and curses roundly on the first. The people who design, make, paint and shift—especially shift—the Scenes. But not the Electricians. Not yet. Their turn may come later.

It is quite unnecessary for you to know anything whatever about the play to be produced. Such knowledge would only interfere with your preconceived notions. When the producer submits his ideas, if any, all you need to do is to discover how much of what he wants is quite impossible. Then give him something quite different. Producers must be kept in their proper places, otherwise they tend to get uppish.

If you are a scenic designer always wear baggy flannels and a polo jumper to indicate that you know what's what, and if you wish to make it clear that you are quite modern, with a slant to the ultra-suburban, always splash your water-colour perspective sketches with lots of black walls, pink doors and green windows. They are very outre and too, too quaint. Also completely ignore the size of your stage and its restrictions ; or the need for accommodating such minor accessories as furniture, props and lighting equipment. It is not your fault if your imagination is boundless in its flight. Present your design and refuse all suggestions. When the dust of battle has subsided

and nobody is on speaking terms with anybody the squad will be able to pull out the old oak-panel set and thus save a lot of work.

When obtaining furniture for small stages see that it is as large as possible. It will be *such* fun at the dress rehearsal to watch the actors sort out their movements.

Throughout the performances sit in the wings and carry on animated discussions as loudly as possible. During a scene of high tension and low tones it is so helpful to have as a background a disputed comparison of the merits of Arsenal and Everton.

Never wear rubber-soled shoes. Besides resisting more successfully the stray tacks and drawing pins, leather gives such comforting sounds, especially when aided by hob-nails.

If the " entrance from hall " is on stage right make sure that the door bell rings in the prompt corner. After all why shouldn't *you* play for laughs ?

During a quick change never allow anyone to strike the grand piano until all the next setting is firmly cleated and braced. And talking of braces ensure that these are fixed so that only contortionists can gracefully negotiate any entrance or exit.

There are many golden rules for the conduct of dress rehearsals, chief among which are :—

1. As many props as possible should be missing until " to-morrow night."
2. Doors and windows should invariably be in the wrong places and open the wrong way.
3. The scene plan should be left at home.
4. Immediately the curtain falls on an act commence to strike. It will be so helpful if the producer wishes to run through the scene again.

5. Throughout the rehearsal have handily placed a piece of wood—any piece—a large hammer and a saw. Use the two latter alternately and the lot persistently. Never mind what for—just use them.

6. Don't mark off the setting for any Act until after it has been struck. Then guess.

7. Always leave before the time to set the last scene.

8. Arrange for the final touches to the scene to be performed just before the curtain rises—fifteen minutes late—on the first night. It will help to give the cast the jitters which should make you laugh a lot.

Finally, when running flats always choose the route across which are the greatest number of electric cables, sill-irons are specially fitted to flats to ensure that V.I.R. shall be cut to ribbons as quickly as possible. Even if the treasurer is rude the Cabel Manufacturers' Association will like you enormously.

RECENT AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS EQUIPPED BY STRAND

RALPH READER'S SCOUT GANG SHOW AT THE SCALA THEATRE.

"WALTZES FROM VIENNA"

"PEOPLE AT SEA"

"CALL IT A DAY"

"THE ARCADIANS"

"THE DESERT SONG"

and others.

WE WILL LIGHT ANY SHOW—ANY TIME—ANYWHERE

Glossary

(Continued in spite of opposition)

The Green — The acting area . . . on the stage, of course. Since spread of golfing epidemic, term little used in theatres outside the bars.

Flys — Or Fly Gallery - or Fly Floor . . . built high (architects permitting) on side walls of stage from which are operated the ropes (or lines) which pass over the pulley wheels in the grid. Fly-men possess adhesive feet but no wings . . . or prospects of growing them.

Fly-rail — Rail of Fly Gallery to which are fastened cleats to which the fly-men secure (or " tie-off ") the ropes (or lines) aforesaid. When not secured (or " tied-off ") effectively there is likely to be a funeral.

Cyclorama — The subject of much controversy, admiration and blah. Usually a curved sky-cloth or *more* usually—not curved. May be a plaster dome—and sometimes is. Not infrequently has the form of a curved cloth of muslin, canvas or velour. In which case is often referred to as a " Pam Cloth," which, strangely enough, abbreviates " panorama." Cycloramas should render exterior borders (q.v.) superfluous but rarely do.

Borders — Quite frequently referred to by earnest but innocent people as " flies " or " pelmets." Usually deserve *much* worse designation. They are the strips of canvas or velour suspended horizontally to mask lighting battens and the upper part of the stage. Rarely effective and always intrusive. For interior settings, mostly supplanted by ceiling cloth.

Brail Moving a suspended article, *e.g.*, batten or piece of scenery, either up or down stage and fastening in a position out of the vertical. Not to be confused with any aid to the blind —even though some stage hands do find the vertical position difficult to maintain.

Tabs The title of a bright little journal issued by a famous firm of Stage Lighting Engineers who are (or should be) proud to have the privilege of including on their staff . . . (*Quite* enough of that.—Ed.) Otherwise the main curtains closing the proscenium (q.v.) opening—sometimes mercifully—sometimes precariously ! Being, in that case, abbreviation of *tableaux curtains*.

Proscenium Should always be familiarly called " Prosc." The Greeks had a word for it. So have the people who prefer "Proscemium." It is really the name of that part of the stage between the curtain and the orchestra but modern usage tends to restrict it to refer to the Prosc. opening or arch, *i.e.*, the fourth wall.

Rake *Not* the juvenile lead ! But the rise on a stage from front to back. The modern theatre is responsible for the rake's progress from stage to auditorium.

Tails Sort of supplementary borders—usually hung from fly-rails to prevent front-row sitters from seeing more than they should. An unnecessary precaution in revue when they are obviously looking elsewhere. Electrically speaking, tails are the cables left ready for connecting apparatus to supply. In the case of hired apparatus, tails, although ready when despatched, so frequently return minus plugs. Culprits please blush.

Tales. " That reminds me " . . . etc., etc. *ad nauseum* !

Throw The distance between a source of light and object to be illuminated.
or, when object is objectionable, an act by occupant of gallery seat, indicating displeasure and associated preferably with rotten egg or tomato.

Ways and Means

Reading the report of Mr. Applebee's lecture on Stage Lighting which appears in this issue, brought back to mind an experience of the writer during the spot of bother across the Channel some years back.

The Division was concentrated in a camp a few miles behind the front line, and life was less exciting but somewhat tedious. Relaxation was sought in various ways, one of which was to form a concert party to entertain the troops. There is no need to chronicle the difficulties of rehearsing because these notes are intended only to give an idea of how we got over the question of Stage Lighting.

An aeroplane hangar which was used as a Y.M.C.A. Canteen also served the purpose of Church, Boxing Ring, Theatre and any other service it could be put to. At one end was a raised platform built on boxes and table trestles, and of course there was no lighting at all. The only material available was a supply of candles which were purchased from the Y.M.C.A., supplemented by a head lamp stolen from a G.S. wagon. The curtain was made of a number of army blankets sewn together, nailed to a marquee pole and raised and lowered by means of a rope. Stage decorations were anything we could get hold of to cover up the iron supports of the hangar.

Footlights were made of tin cans cut in half placed at regular intervals along the front of the stage, with one candle in each. On each side of the stage were large biscuit tins with tops and one side cut away, in each of which were placed about twenty candles. This gave a reasonable amount of light, but created shadows. These were overcome by the head lamp which

was fixed to a cross girder about half-way down the hangar and was focussed so that the light, although not particularly strong covered the whole stage. Obviously there was a certain amount of flickering from the candles, while the head-lamp was not too efficient, but that did not matter so long as we got the show over.

We were so proud of our lighting that we overlooked the snags. Half way through the performance the trouble started. The biscuit tins got so hot from the candle flames that the candles began to sag and melt away, grease dripped from the tins and one by one the candles ceased to burn. This of course made a great deal of difference to the effect, and we wanted that light badly. We could not touch the tins because of the heat, so we took a couple of chairs, stuck candles all over the seats and fixed to the backs to act as reflectors the sides we had taken from the large biscuit boxes. Then those members of the party who were not required on the stage stood holding the chairs above their heads by the legs. The Footlight candles saw us through, and apart from giving useful service in that capacity they were also responsible for a humorous episode.

The writer was on the stage doing reasonably well with an amusing number. A small French boy of about ten, who understood no English, was sitting in the front row, bored to tears, amazed that the Tommies should find anything to laugh at in the efforts of the performer. Right in the middle of the act he got up, slopped through the mud on the floor of the hangar to the feet of the performer, and with a look of utter disgust calmly lit a cigarette from one of the footlight candles. He got the biggest laugh.

However, the show was a success and we went round to several hospitals giving performances.

A Letter from an Architect

Mr. Henry Elder, A.I.A.A., is a well-known Manchester architect closely associated with both theatre and cinema. His work in such cinemas as the Longford, Stretford, the Rotu, and the County, Reddish, shows a bold departure from the orthodox. He was responsible for the alterations to the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, recently converted from cinema back to theatre.

Manchester,

13th October, 1938.

To the Editor of "Tabs."

Dear Sir,

There is little disputing that the theatre of to-day is insufficient for the encouragement and development of play production ; it is also similarly depressing to any theatre lover to note that its offspring, the cinema, should have made such rapid strides, unfortunately at the expense of its parent. Yet it must be admitted that the theatre itself should accept much of the responsibility for its present situation. There are to-day, as even in times past, many good playwrights who cannot be encouraged to write plays to satisfy the public yearning for amusement and incidental education by the personal attribute of individual living acting. It is now that something must be done, not in the near future, but immediately ; not in London but in the Provinces, or the future of the Theatre will be relegated to the Limbo of the Lost.

The solution is difficult but not impossibly so. It demands that everyone should work together with an open mind and recognise and remedy the existing difficulties. The object of this letter, Sir, is to try and help from an architectural angle in the hope that future discussion may be encouraged and thereby elucidate the position.

The architect's job of work is to provide a theatre which will operate in all its units as one large machine. The only way he can approach this problem is by observation, research and analysis. The theatre is a complex problem mainly because so many ideas are held by many people with no outlet for the eventual discussion, and also because it is the architect's job to satisfy not only the utilitarian but also the administrative side. It is increasingly difficult for an architect to obtain minimum requirements regarding the stage. The term minimum requirements may need to be more fully explained ; but you will readily appreciate the meaning when, say, ten theatres anywhere in England are analysed. The stages vary in every respect from proscenium width to depth of stage, from lighting equipment to trap or fly accommodation, making the question of stage adaptation of touring plays increasingly difficult. Not only do these practical difficulties influence those shows going on tour, but the playwright finds his ideas fettered by the limitations of a stage doubtfully superior to that of the Greeks. He has certainly great possibilities for the use of lighting. He also may save the stage staff many minutes of valuable time to enable it to have a drink in between acts, like the rest of the audience are forced to do. But apart from this the architectural design of the stage has changed little for many centuries.

You may probably remind me that the playwright or the producer never knows what he is going to do next or what he may require (this being particularly evident at the last rehearsal !). But if the question were discussed, many suggestions would be forthcoming.

From the architect's point of view, the Stage Manager is one of the most important persons, and from him could be learned practical difficulties at the stage end. But he is usually engaged long after the building has taken shape and far too late for his practical experience and advice to be taken into account.

There is in this country a growing body of expert theatrical opinion but little or no effort has yet been made to co-ordinate that opinion or to establish recognised standards to which the theatre should confrom. Is it not time the theatre of to-day and the future became the subject of qualified research and approved conclusions so that architect and consultant may work from a common accepted basis instead of being confused by a mass of conflicting opinions, as may so easily occur at present.

Ultimately, the interests of proprietor, promoter, playwright, producer, actor, technician and audience touch common ground on the stage itself. The theatre of the future has untold potentialities that can be realised only if there is some enthusiastic and enlightened co-operation between them all. That co-operation must not seek to restrict individual effort but rather to remove present obstacles to free expression. There may then be hope that the public, already becoming cinema-tired, will again become theatre-minded. Both theatre and cinema should benefit since the arts of both ought to be not antagonistic but complementary.

Yours faithfully,

HENRY ELDER.

Black Light

What is Black Light and what are its uses ?

Black light is radiation in the near Ultra Violet region of the spectrum—the region just beyond the Blue—and is practically invisible to the human eye. The light emitted from Gasfilled Lamps contains a small percentage of Black Light, but Arc Lamps and the new Mercury Discharge Lamps possess a far higher percentage. When this Black Light is thrown on certain chemicals it excites them and the hitherto invisible light becomes visible. This is known as fluorescence. To give an example. If we paint a cross on a piece of white card using Strand Invisible Green liquid, when the card is placed in the rays of an arc lamp the whole card will appear white, for although the arc does contain some Black light (Ultra Violet) which is causing the cross to fluoresce green, the proportion of white light is so strong that the fluorescent cross is overwhelmed. If, however, we place a special Black glass filter in front of the arc,, this cuts off all the white light and yet allows the Ultra Violet rays to pass. The cross will then stand out green and the card will be invisible. Actually a very faint violet glow accompanies the Black light but this is so low in intensity that when objects are in a fluorescent state, this glow can be disregarded.

As seen under ordinary light.

Hitherto, Black light has been economically available only from Arcs, which explains why this effect has been limited to the Theatre. Recently, however, a new 125 watt Black light lamp has been introduced. This lamp which will burn in any position and is no longer than an ordinary 200 w. lamp, is of the Mercury Discharge type and gives a very high output of light in the required region of the spectrum. Each lamp carries its own filter in the shape of a black glass bulb. This lamp provides, for the first time, a convenient source of Black light which may be used anywhere, provided A.C. current is available.

For Stage purposes, Strand Black Light can be employed to produce many effects—changes of colour to both flesh and clothing—disappearance of certain parts of clothing or articles, and so on. By treating garments worn by the Actors with the special liquid provided, they will appear quite ordinary under white light, but under the rays of the Black lamp only the garments are visible and appear to move without any mechanical aid. Similarly, any article treated with the liquid can, under the rays of the lamp, appear to be suspended in mid air.

As seen under "Black Light"

There is not sufficient room here to enlarge on the possibilities of Black Light, but a very informative Brochure will be sent free of charge to any one interested in this subject. Your request for this Booklet should be sent to the Editor, "Tabs," Strand Electric & Engineering Co., Ltd., 24 Floral Street, London, W.C.2.